Congresswoman Kosmas Passes Bipartisan Amendment to Help Protect Central Florida's Water Resources

Measure Will Increase Understanding of How Natural Disasters Impact Local Water Supplies

(Washington, DC) – Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) successfully passed an amendment that would require a nationwide assessment of the impacts of natural disasters on local water resources. Hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and other weather events can lead to saltwater intrusion, infrastructure damage, sewer overflows, and stormwater runoff that can harm local water supplies. A better understanding of these impacts will help local communities address water supply issues before, during, and after major storms.

The measure amends the National Water Research and Development Initiative Act (H.R. 1145), a bill to coordinate national research and development efforts on water resources in order to help protect water supplies for generations to come. The bipartisan Kosmas Amendment was adopted by a unanimous vote of 424-0 and the full bill passed the House 413-10.

"Determining the impact of natural disasters will help ensure that our communities have access to safe, reliable water supplies without interruption," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "As residents of Central Florida, we are constantly threatened by hurricanes, tornadoes and other severe weather. The only way to protect our water resources is to understand the consequences of these events."

"This amendment will help Florida and other states better respond to natural disasters that threaten water resources," said Steve Barnes, Vice Chair of the Seminole Soil and Water Conservation District. "We all saw the environmental harm that came in the wake of the Katrina disaster and this amendment will help prevent similar disasters in the future."

"This bill also creates an overview of the nation's water resources, which should lead to better stewardship," said Barnes. "It also creates tools for resolving water disputes, which are becoming more common as the growing demand for safe, affordable drinking water increases the strain on already threatened supplies."

Kosmas' amendment received strong support from both sides of the aisle. Republican Congressman Ralph Hall (TX-4) rose on the floor of the House and urged for passage of the Kosmas Amendment.

"We know that natural disasters such as flood, droughts, hurricanes and all that can have a very significant effect on water levels and cause major disruptions in local communities," said Congressman Hall. "It's important that we achieve a better understanding of the impacts of these natural disasters on water resources so that local managers and state officials can plan and manage for future use and economic growth. It simply makes sense that we coordinate efforts at the local, state and national level to achieve these ends."

"While our nation will always face disasters of one form or another, we can do more to mitigate the effects through careful study and careful planning. The gentlelady's amendment moves in that direction and I urge its passage," added Hall.

Click HERE to view floor speeches made by Congresswoman Kosmas (0:40 mark) and Congressman Hall (5:12 mark).

Click HERE to read the full text of Congresswoman Kosmas' speech.

The National Water Research and Development Initiative Act will help create an effective national water strategy that uses federal research and development dollars efficiently and eliminates redundant programs. The bill requires the president to establish an interagency committee with representation from all Federal agencies dealing with water to implement a National Water Research and Development Initiative to improve Federal activities on water, including research, development, demonstration, data collection and dissemination, education, and technology transfer.

The interagency committee would be charged with developing a plan to accomplish the following research outcomes: the implementation of a national water census, the development of new water technologies and techniques, the development of tools to facilitate water resource conflicts, the development of information technology systems to enhance water quality and supply, the improvement of hydrologic prediction models, an enhanced understanding related to ecosystem services, and an analysis of the energy-water nexus.

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